

VILA RECÔNCAVO

[Town Life]

who walks about with a huge round basket on his head crying, 444
"Pão, pão." 256

Dona Carmen's husband, Damião, is also a storekeeper. 441
His store is in the downhill part of town, near the fishermen. 463
The two stores are run separately, and the couple are doing [444]
well financially. In addition to his store, Damião also owns [427]
several canoes and fish nets which he rents to fishermen. He [452]
is the only storekeeper in town who gives credit to people who [426]
cannot pay immediately, allowing bills to run many months
and even more than a year. He also allows his customers to
borrow money in order to buy things outside his store--for
instance fish, which he does not handle. He does not charge
interest on these loans, nor seemingly make any demands on
those who borrow. On the other hand the borrowers feel a sort
of loyalty toward him and do not forget their debts, which they
eventually manage to pay.

Three of the smallest stores are owned and operated by 441
women, whose husbands have set them up in business in a 444
small way in order, as one put it, to "give my wife something 463
to do." It is considered desirable for a woman to operate a [562]
store and it is usually the beginning of something larger, for
later, whenever possible, the husband will stop his own work
and help operate the store. In the case of the smaller stores
the owner generally lives in the same building, either along-
side the store or behind it. The larger storekeepers, however,
usually have separate houses. At night they lock up the stores, [431]
which are sometimes guarded by dogs or even by the cashiers [66]
who sleep there. The storekeepers are usually asked for dona-
tions to the church at the time of any special festivals, and
generally become politically active after they become estab-
lished in business.

The stock in most of the stores is pretty much the same, 443
varying in amount rather than diversity: drinks (rum and soft
drinks), dried meat (the staple meat of the population), ce-
reals, cigars, cigarettes, estivas (which include beans, rice,
and farina, the three great staples of the local diet), as well
as coffee, palm oil (azeite de dendê), vinegar, olive oil, gar-
lic, onions, wooden sandals, condensed and powdered milk,
salt, sugar, miudezas (small items such as matches and rib-
bons), toilet articles and laundry soaps, bluing agents and
starch, grass mats, kerosene, and in one store aluminum
kitchenware which is not sold very often, as well as nails,
wire, screws, and wrapping paper and cord. One store in the